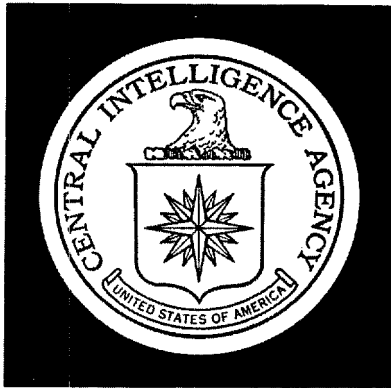


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DIRECTORATE OF  
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# *WEEKLY SUMMARY*

## *Special Report*

*South Africa's New Foreign Policy Offensive*

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## SOUTH AFRICA'S NEW FOREIGN POLICY OFFENSIVE

The new government of Prime Minister Vorster in South Africa has initiated a foreign policy more pragmatic, imaginative, and flexible than that of the late Hendrik Verwoerd. In conjunction with recent trends in Africa and elsewhere, this new approach offers short-term possibilities for avoiding a confrontation with the world community because it implies some flexibility on racial matters. In reality, however, Vorster is just as dedicated as Verwoerd was to preserving firm white control, and even the most skillful diplomacy designed to induce an appreciable change in Pretoria's racial policy seems destined to fail. Such failure could in the long run serve further to weaken the credibility of a peaceful, negotiating approach to the South African racial problem and strengthen at least the African pressure for an international confrontation with the Vorster regime.

The South African Image

Almost every country condemns South Africa for a racial policy which gives its white minority privileged enjoyment of the country's wealth and its white government dictatorial control over the country's nonwhite population. Undemocratic rule by a privileged group is, of course, not unique to South Africa. Democratic government is far from the political norm in Africa, and even certain African-governed states are dominated by one or more privileged tribes. The favoritism practiced by the white "tribe" of South Africa, however, is considered different, partly because its whites are viewed not as the dominant "tribe" but rather as the last and most op-

pressive vestiges of a discredited era of European colonialism. The white dictatorship, moreover, is not thought of as directed toward a more rapid rise in the general standard of living--an excuse granted to some dictatorships--but rather toward serving the economic interests of the white minority alone.

South Africa cannot avoid international condemnation so long as its whites remain determined to maintain their privileged position and so long as large segments of world opinion continue to believe simply that white privilege and power on a nonwhite continent are wrong. Neither view is likely to change in the foreseeable future. Indeed, until recently the South African Government often succeeded

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only in aggravating world hostility by attempting a defense of white privilege and rule in terms--backed up by action--so out of tune with modern political principles and ideals that they appeared more to reflect a concern for the ruling National Party's dogma on the racial question than any concern about world opinion.

#### Propaganda Under Verwoerd

Prime Minister Verwoerd, until his assassination in 1966, had attempted to make South Africa's racial policy seem compatible with some aspects of post - World War II world opinion about who should govern and why. He changed the language of white supremacy from baasskaap, an Afrikaner word for "white bossism," to apartheid, meaning separate-ness. The policy of apartheid, Verwoerd claimed, meant that no ethnic group would "boss" another but that each group would control its own separate area of the country--Africans in separate tribal areas called Bantustans--in conformity with its own culture and traditions.

As presented by Verwoerd, this idea had some resemblance to the popular principle of "national" self-determination, insofar as whites and the different African tribal groups of South Africa can be considered separate "nations" in economically integrated South Africa and insofar as his hazy generalizations about the possibility of eventual independence for Bantustans were credible.

The outside world, however, refused to believe that South Africa seriously contemplated allowing the Bantustans to opt for independence or that apartheid was a noble application of the principle of self-determination. For one thing, the areas prescribed for Bantustans were the poorest and least economically viable. For another, the various African tribes comprising about 68 percent of South Africa's population were assigned only 13 percent of its territory.

Most important, Verwoerd's foreign critics rejected his contention that ethnic considerations were the controlling factors in determining nationality in South Africa and, hence, of full citizenship in any given area of the country. Large numbers of non-white South Africans had long lived in Verwoerd's "white" areas. They had more in common with the modern culture of "white areas" than with the tribal culture of the proposed Bantustans, and they were inexorably bound to the whites' economy. To permit only whites to attain full citizenship in such areas was racism, the critics declared.

Under Verwoerd, white South Africa's reaction to this rejection of apartheid was to meet the critics head on. Although the whites continued to proclaim the altruism of apartheid, they frequently also asserted candidly and unashamedly that the basic issue in the country was control, which they frankly intended to keep in white hands.

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In the face of world rejection of apartheid on moral grounds, the South Africans behind Verwoerd increasingly withdrew from the sophistry of modern-day propaganda. They declared that if their inflexibility toward world opinion led to their destruction, it would be their fate but not their fault. They get on with the business of stripping non-whites of all rights in "white" South Africa--which also involved many instances of petty application of apartheid that made no contribution to white power but gave Verwoerd's racial dogma a tidy consistency. At the same time, draconian security laws were expanded and rigidly enforced against real and imagined subversive threats to the white regime.

#### Divided World Opinion

The world community is divided on whether to force a confrontation with South Africa over its racial policy. The Western states which have important trade and other ties there and thus are anxious to maintain political stability in the area have resisted a confrontation. Most African countries, as well as the Communist states and others having few vital links and white-ruled southern Africa, have pressed for a showdown. Increasingly they have tried to force those in the West resisting such a move to choose between their interests in South Africa and their interests in black Africa and the UN. They have also tried to make the Western powers believe that political upheaval leading to black rule is inevitable in South Africa,

and that unless the West plays a part in those developments, it will be excluded from influencing the direction black South Africa takes.

Last year a showdown appeared to be nearing. Pretoria refused to honor UN-sponsored economic sanctions against Rhodesia's white rebel regime. At one point, a UN-approved British oil blockade of a Portuguese Mozambique port serving Rhodesia raised the danger, in some South African opinion at least, that sanctions might be extended to similar ports in South Africa. Moreover, the 1966 UN resolution which formally transferred South Africa's League of Nations mandate rights in South-West Africa to the new world body posed a threat of direct conflict between the UN and Pretoria should the resolution be implemented.

By the time Verwoerd was assassinated in September, however, a confrontation between Pretoria and the world community backed by the great powers had begun to appear less likely. Britain lobbied at the UN and elsewhere to exclude South Africa from sanctions directed against Rhodesia, and the International Court of Justice refused to take a decision on South Africa's continued mandate rights in South-West Africa, a judgment favorable to Pretoria. The governments of soon-to-be independent Lesotho and Botswana, moreover, indicated their intention to be good neighbors with South Africa, on which their economy depended. These and other developments set the stage for South Africa's re-entry into the international

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claimed that the African majority was unfit to rule a modern state like South Africa and that a non-white Westernized elite could not be assimilated into the white ruling class because of lasting ethnic and cultural shortcomings. In any case, it has argued, white rule in South Africa is justified by a Calvinist predestination.

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political arena--a re-entry which Verwoerd began shortly before his death and which his successor has continued.

#### Vorster's New Foreign Policy

When Balthazar Vorster, the man identified with South Africa's strongest security legislation of the 1960s, became prime minister following Verwoerd's assassination, many observers assumed that his government would be even more extremist on the racial question. Vorster has indeed done nothing to dilute white control. His government has in fact taken additional measures to strengthen apartheid and security laws. Under Vorster, however, the government has for the most part abandoned its earlier blatant statements about white supremacy and has shown new pragmatism and subtlety in the conduct of its foreign policy.

When the British-ruled African territories contiguous with South Africa--Botswana and Lesotho--were given their independence in 1966, Vorster's government quickly recognized them. Moreover, it attempted to normalize some relations with them, concluding economic assistance and trade agreements with Lesotho, and giving VIP treatment to visiting officials from both countries. A delegation from more distant Malawi received similar treatment and came home with a trade agreement of its own.

Pretoria has declared its willingness to extend the treat-

ment to any other black African states which might wish to normalize relations with South Africa "as it is." Moreover, it has allowed to go unchallenged the rumor that, although it will not join in sanctions against Rhodesia, it would like to see resumption of negotiations between London and Salisbury for a settlement of Rhodesia's rebellion--a stance with greater public appeal in London and other capitals of the world than among most whites in Rhodesia.

Vorster's government still insists that it retains legal authority over South-West Africa although it admits that the territory has some international status. Recently, it expressed its willingness to discuss with other "responsible" parties the future political development of South-West Africa--although under Pretoria's control. South Africa has offered to give the former mandate's separate racial and tribal groups the right eventually to become independent and choose a form of association with each other and with South Africa.

In one speech, Vorster hinted at similar possibilities for Bantustans within South Africa, although later he indicated that the possibility of full independence was remote even for the most advanced Bantustan--the Transkei. Nonetheless, Vorster has taken some new measures to help the economies of the tribal reserves which, according to the Bantustan scheme, would move them closer to self-government.

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Vorster's government has also shown a desire to lessen conflicts with foreign opinion in some of its relations with non-African states. In February 1967, for example, the government made every effort to play down the resentment of white South Africans over the last-minute refusal of the United States to allow shore leave in South Africa to the crew of a US warship on any but a non-racial basis. Similarly, Pretoria's decision to allow integrated South African teams to participate in the Olympic Games and to allow racially mixed sports teams from some other countries to play in South Africa is part of the effort to develop a more favorable image.

#### Conditions for Change

Vorster's inexperience in foreign affairs, his willingness to give the Foreign Ministry a larger role in making foreign policy, and his disposition toward some experimentation contrast with Verwoerd's insistence on taking personal control of the smallest details of foreign policy and with his aloof obsession with maintaining the neatness of the apartheid dogma in all aspects of government action. The differences between the foreign policies of the two prime ministers are, however, mostly a matter of style.

Vorster's foreign policy, like Verwoerd's, basically is an attempt to get world opinion to accept white control of South Africa as both normal and useful

in Africa. In fact, his policies of normalizing relations with black African states and proclaiming the normalcy of separate "ethnic nations" in South and South-West Africa were to some extent attempted by Verwoerd. Similarly, Verwoerd's plans, like Vorster's, were to attempt to use aid and trade agreements with African states and development schemes for Africans under Pretoria's control to convince the world that the white regime benefits Africans as well. Vorster apparently believes, however, that recent trends in Africa and elsewhere have made such initiatives more acceptable to world opinion, and that he might now succeed where Verwoerd failed.

It is increasingly evident, for instance, that many independent African states have little more prospect for economic viability than would South Africa's proposed Bantustan "nations." Vorster may believe, therefore, that if world opinion can welcome the independence of the ministates of Africa--especially Botswana and Lesotho, both so vulnerable to Pretoria--it may also be less hostile to South Africa's Bantustan concept.

More important, there is current in black Africa today a growing pragmatism and a prime concern with domestic problems which contrasts with the earlier adventurism manifested in Pan-Africanism and in the concrete assistance given to the liberation movements of white-ruled southern Africa. Now that the excitement of gaining independence

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is over, African governments are having to face the sobering problems of governing states which are not really nations and which have but scarce resources to allocate. With few exceptions, the African military coups of the past few years are a response to internal problems brought by tribalism, governmental ineptness, extravagance, and poor economies. These new regimes, with Ghana the most notable example, are involving themselves far less actively in concrete programs of action against white southern Africa than did the civilian governments they replaced.

The demonstrated inability of all black Africa to take effective action within the Organization of African Unity (OAU) against the white regime in Rhodesia doubtless also had a sobering effect on whatever aspirations some African governments may have had for taking on much stronger South Africa. Many of the African foreign ministers who committed their countries to relatively strong measures against the Rhodesian regime at the December 1965 OAU meeting were subsequently rebuked and their commitments disavowed by their more pragmatic superiors. Few African countries adhered to the meeting's decision that African countries should break diplomatic relations with Britain over its failure to end the Rhodesian rebellion quickly. There is also a private but growing belief in some African countries that Africans in the white redoubt should do more for their own lib-

eration instead of relying on already independent African governments to fight their battles.

This developing pragmatism and the growing priority accorded national interests in black Africa have been paralleled and partially fed within the past year by the demonstrated unwillingness of the great powers to commit their power against a South Africa determined to defend its interests. Britain consistently refuses to employ force in Rhodesia or to extend to South Africa the UN sanctions against Rhodesia. The Communist world has limited its support to Africans on the Rhodesia question largely to rhetoric. In different ways both East and West refuse to enforce the UN decision ending Pretoria's authority in South-West Africa.

African governments now must realize that if they press too hard in international forums for a showdown with South Africa, the great powers may be forced to acknowledge more openly their refusal to employ the necessary power. This in turn would serve to dim the specter South Africa's enemies find it useful to project of a world hostility which can escalate to a showdown with Pretoria. Prime Minister Vorster in any case seems convinced that the major powers will continue to vacillate and that most African states will not themselves force the issue to a showdown. South Africa's recent foreign policy initiative seems designed in part to make the pill easier to swallow for both sides.

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Outlook

External developments, not Vorster's foreign policy, have been largely responsible for defusing the potential for a confrontation between Pretoria and the rest of the world. Vorster's initiative, however, has contributed to this defusing, just as Verwoerd's self-righteous withdrawal from international politics aggravated his country's problem with world opinion. Simply by using--even though distorting--the language of the principles cherished in world opinion, by acting in ways which make white South Africa useful--even if only marginally--to black Africa, and by offering to discuss some aspects of the future of South-West Africa, Vorster has given South Africa at least the appearance of flexibility.

Appearances are sometimes useful in international relations. This is especially the case in the South Africa problem, in which the West must be able to assume a posture of opposition to white supremacy even if it decides against a policy of action. Vorster's recent initiatives--particularly his willingness to have a "dialogue" on South-West Africa--allow Western countries to give the appearance of influencing change in South Africa without having to commit their power to do so. Moreover, so long as South Africa elects to continue a show of movement, some minor benefits may spin off for Africans in the area which may appear to represent actual progress.

Appearances, however, will not alter white control of South Africa--Vorster's firm objective. Even his implied willingness--in statements regarding the future of Bantustans--eventually to see South Africa's northern border ringed by a tier of African-ruled states is based on his expectation of a repetition of the precedent set by Botswana and Lesotho, whose pragmatic foreign policies serve the interests of white rule in South Africa.

Similarly, Vorster's recent attempt to normalize relations and to give economic assistance to more distant African states stemmed principally from his belief that this would be useful to the maintenance of white control. Moreover, despite its apparent somewhat more flexible approach to foreign affairs, Vorster's government has actually tightened apartheid and security measures within the country.

Therefore, most African states almost certainly will continue to condemn South Africa and press the world community to take action against it. What disturbs and sometimes infuriates political leaders in black Africa is not the failure to achieve independence for additional ministates which must in any event have client relationships with Pretoria, nor the absence of white South African benevolence toward blacks, but rather the simple fact of white domination on a black continent. Even the relatively moderate regimes in black Africa have continued to condemn South Africa despite Vorster's recent foreign

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policy initiatives. Indeed, several have denounced Vorster's moves as cunning hypocrisy and, for example, have reproached the government of Malawi for abetting Pretoria in its scheme by signing trade agreements and otherwise normalizing relations.

It is uncertain to what extent other nations will join those African governments which have rejected South Africa's recent overtures. Equally uncertain is whether widespread rejection would lead to Vorster's "return to the laager" (the Boer's encircling ring of wagons)--the reaction of Verwoerd's government. What seems likely is that if the major powers continue to refuse to commit their power against South Africa, many states in today's black Africa will reluctantly confine themselves to roles as critical observers of the attempts of others to induce a peaceful change in South Africa.

So long as the great powers refuse to threaten South Africa, and so long as pragmatism toward Pretoria continues within black African states--particularly

those contiguous to South Africa--its government may not again retract into its shell. Great power policy toward South Africa and pragmatism in politically unsettled black Africa are variables, however. Should these change and appear to bring forth threats to the security of the South African white regime, Vorster's government almost certainly would respond with actions unmistakably designed to preserve white control. The response might not be a Verwoerd-type withdrawal in all cases. Pretoria can use its economic and political leverage to move actively against radical adventurist policies of neighboring African states--for example, by putting restrictions on African migrant labor.

In any event, given the inflexibility of Vorster's government with regard to white control, it seems unlikely that leaders in black Africa or elsewhere will view his new foreign policy initiatives as offering much hope for changing South Africa's racial policy through peaceful persuasion.

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